

## 1 TIMOTHY 1:12-17

### REDEEMED!

“I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”<sup>1</sup>

**H**ow gracious is Christ Jesus our Lord! Not only is He Ruler over all that He has created, but He receives sinners though they have rebelled against Him; He pardons them and appoints them to His glorious service. How unlike our own experiences in life! How unlike our own actions! When we have surrendered to those against whom we have waged battle, we do not anticipate promotion to positions of trust and service. When we best an opponent, we are wary, cautious, hesitating to have anything to do with that one we have bested even after they have yielded to us and ceased their opposition against us.

It took Paul many years to realise the value in John Mark because the young man had proven timid and consequently failed to continue with the missionaries throughout the first tour. The Apostle was not so terribly different from the most of us. We may accept one who fails, but we want time; and though they are restored by the Lord, we often err on the side of being overly cautious. However, the Master moves relatively swiftly in appointing those whom He redeems.

I’m not suggesting that we should immediately accept into positions of responsibility those who surrender to the Faith—even the Master allowed time for a Saul of Tarsus to mature. However, it is the Master Himself Who is watching the maturation process and urging those who have submitted to His reign to grow up so that He can employ them in His service. God will never be satisfied with mediocrity; but God will train us and use us powerfully to His glory.

I am struck by the fact that God does not merely suggest that His people serve Him. Speaking with the disciples, Jesus spoke of the urgency of the need for labourers. Listen to Jesus, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” [LUKE 10:2]. The Master’s language was strong. The word translated “send out” [Greek, *ekballō*] is a strong word that conveys the primary meaning of “to throw,” or “to drive out.” Thus, the Master is saying that we are not merely to ask for workers, but we are to plead with Him to compel them to go out into His harvest fields. Underscore in your mind that the Master does not merely save people and then leave them alone; He actively works to equip each one and then works to compel them to labour for His cause. Christians are saved to serve!

The process leading to appointment begins with redemption. Join me in recalling all that God has done for us. Then, when we have an appreciation of His effective work in our lives, let’s consider what He would do through us to the praise of His glory.

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**OUR POSITION** — Paul writes as one who is awed in the knowledge of God’s grace and mercy. Truly, each believer should be both humbled and awed at the thought of God’s grace revealed in His great salvation. I am struck at the seemingly ubiquitous arrogance witnessed in the lives of far too many who are called by the Name of the Son of God. The tendency is to wear redemption almost as a badge of merit. We often project an air of superiority among the faithful, imagining that God was exceptionally lucky when He redeemed us. The reality is far different, however.

We will do well to recall a statement the Master gave His disciples in the days of his flesh. “Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and recline at table’? Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink’? Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty’” [LUKE 17:7-10].

Focus on Jesus’ final summary statement: “So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’” The disciples, most of whom would have been able to assert that they had done all that they were commanded, would be able only to say, “We are slaves undeserving of special praise; we have only done what was out duty.”<sup>2</sup>

In order to comprehend what God has done, we need to remember what we were when we were saved. The Apostle to the Gentiles looks back, recalling what he was when he was called. “I was a blasphemer, persecutor and insolent opponent,” he says. As a summation of his past life, his assessment is comprehensive, though not exhaustive. In order to ensure precision, let’s review his own statement delivered before the Jewish people.

“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day. I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished” [ACTS 22:3-5].

As the Apostle related these details of his past, I have no doubt that he recalled a day when he participated in the execution of a man of God. “When [the Jews] heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at [Stephen]. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’ But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

Doctor Luke undoubtedly received this information first-hand from Saul. Awful though this recitation may be, the opening words of the following verse are more horrific still. “And Saul approved of his execution.” The words translated “execution,” conveys the concept of murder. The opening words could be translated, “Saul agreed completely with murdering him.”

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<sup>2</sup> LUKE 17:10, The NET Bible

Now, pick up in the middle of the first verse of the eighth chapter. “And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison” [ACTS 7:54-8:3]. Pay special attention to the final statement: “Saul was ravaging the church.” Saul of Tarsus was as a mad boar in the vineyard of the Lord, doing all he could to destroy the people of God.

In fact, in the ninth chapter we again meet this enraged rabbi, and he is becoming more virulent still in his pursuit of believers. He has hounded them out of Jerusalem; now he wants to ensure that they are extirpated from the earth. “Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem” [ACTS 9:1, 2].

Clearly, in his own estimate, Paul had reached the nadir of wickedness at this point. Remembering his baptism and subsequent appointment to divine service, he provided this assessment, “When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance and saw him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’ And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.’ And he said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles’” [ACTS 22:17-21].

Perhaps you imagine that you are not a terrible sinner. “I’ve never caused innocent people to be jailed,” you may say. “I never murdered anyone, nor have I approved of anyone being murdered,” you may argue. You may contend, “I never arrogantly placed myself in opposition to God!” Are you quite sure of this? Is that contention correct?

Consider this: are you now sinless? Can you state with certainty that you do not sin? Are you prepared to testify that you have never sinned? “Well,” you may demure, “everyone sins.” Of course, that is true; everyone sins; but you are only trying to justify yourself. We know that just as was true of the Psalmist, we also were born in iniquity and conceived in sin [PSALM 51:5]. We know we sin; we need no one to convince us. The Qoheleth spoke a significant truth when he said, “Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins” [ECCLESIASTES 7:20]. In his prayer of dedication for the first Temple, Solomon voiced this identical truth. He prayed, “If [Your people] sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin...” [2 CHRONICLES 6:36]. Indeed, the Wise Man raised a dark question when he wrote:

“Who can say, ‘I have made my heart pure;  
I am clean from my sin?’”

[PROVERBS 20:9]

In a similar manner, the Apostle to the Gentiles has plainly stated our condition in succinct words, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” [ROMANS 3:23]. We also have the testimony provided by the half-brother of our Lord speaking for each of us when he writes, “We all stumble in many ways” [JAMES 3:2]. The Apostle of Love pointedly declares, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” [1 JOHN 1:8]. John also writes, “If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” [1 JOHN 1:10].

Here is a thought exercise for you. Since we have established that you do sin, are you a sinner because you sin? Or do you sin because you are a sinner? Of course, if you have listened to the various passages we just cited, you know that you sin because you are a sinner. Sin is innate to the fallen condition of mankind. That fact that you commit sins does not make you a sinner; the fact that you sin reveals that you are a sinner.

I am deeply disturbed at some testimonies I have heard over the years. It is as though those relating their past life go into exaggerated detail of how they once lived. It almost seems as if those delivering the testimony take special delight in detailing specific sins that once marked their lives. Such individuals appear to want to go into detail concerning their wicked acts. I question the necessity of wading through the slop of past sinful behaviour. It is enough for one to say, “I was a great sinner when I was found by a Great God.”

The problem is that while we are prone to grade sins, all sin offends the True and Living God. Since God is infinite in holiness, of necessity any sin—however small we may adjudge that sin to be—is infinitely offensive. Therefore, there can be no sin, no character flaw, no error in judgement that is not offensive to the Living God. We must always remember that Christ the Lord died because of sin and that each sin was equally offensive since it required the death of the Son of God to expunge the offence.

I still remember what it was to be lost—and so can you if you are redeemed by the mercies of the Master. As one who has received mercy and life in the Son of God, I am qualified to point to Jesus who “is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him” [see **HEBREWS 7:25**]. The same holds true for each one who is saved by His grace.

**HIS PROVISION** — The Apostle asserts, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost” [**1 TIMOTHY 1:15**]. His words reveal the heart of the Master beating as one with his own heart. You will undoubtedly remember that the Master testified of His purpose in becoming a man. Jesus said, “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” [**LUKE 19:10**].

You will recall that on another occasion Jesus rebuked the Pharisees when they complained because He was eating with tax collectors and those they identified as “sinners.” Remember what the Master said on that occasion. “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” [**MATTHEW 9:12, 13**]. Mark that last statement; it reveals Christ great purpose in coming to earth.

In presenting this testimony throughout the days of ministry in Judea, Jesus echoed that which was written of the Lord GOD through the Prophet Ezekiel. “Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice” [**EZEKIEL 34:11-16**].

Jesus often told parables—they served to express truths that could be easily overlooked or even ignored. One such parable He told was used to emphasise the Father's will concerning the lost. "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish" [MATTHEW 18:12-14].

I am not going to tell you anything new. Candidly, if it is new, it is not truthful; and if it is true, it is not novel. The message of life is not some new story that you have never heard. This is the Good News that has been presented repeatedly since the Resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. This Good News begins with the bad news of man's lost condition. When we were lost, we had no hope and we were without God in the world [see EPHESIANS 2:12].

Before the Christ came to present Himself as a sacrifice for sinful man, we looked to God in anticipation that He would provide a means to be cleansed from sin. When Jesus came, He presented His life as a sacrifice for sin. Paul speaks of this presentation on multiple occasions. "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life" [ROMANS 5:8-10].

On another occasion, Paul wrote these powerful words. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" [2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-21].

The one who receives the life offered in Jesus the Son of God has the salvation of which Paul wrote in our text. The redemption in which the Apostle exulted is the present possession of each twice-born child of God. This is evident from the testimony of the Master Himself. "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" [JOHN 5:24]. The one who believes God's testimony now has eternal life—a new quality of life in which that one is alive to God. The one who possesses that eternal life has already transitioned from death to life. Consequently, the redeemed individual shall never come into condemnation.

What does it all mean? **God's salvation is free.** No one can earn the salvation God offers in Christ Jesus the Lord. This is the clear statement of the Word. "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" [ROMANS 6:23]. Earlier, in the same Letter to Roman Christians, Paul has stressed the gift is free, clearly indicating that it cannot be earned. "The free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ" [ROMANS 5:15-17].

The Sons of Korah presented a Psalm that contains a thought-provoking statement.

“Truly no man can ransom another,  
or give to God the price of his life,  
for the ransom of their life is costly  
and can never suffice,  
that he should live on forever  
and never see the pit.”

[PSALM 49:7-9]

The cost of salvation, the forgiveness of sin, the setting aside of our sin so that we can be accepted in the Beloved Son, requires a price that is too great. One cannot go to church enough times, one cannot say enough prayers, nor consume enough of the elements at the Lord's Table, not wash away sin through dipping into the waters of baptism—if there is to be atonement for sin, it must be provided by One who is infinite and altogether righteous. Since salvation delivers from condemnation and from death, the wrath of God is assuaged. No man can provide a sufficient price to secure his salvation; however, God freely offers His salvation.

Augustus M. Toplady beautifully presents this truth in a hymn.

“Could my tears forever flow, could my zeal no languor know,  
These for sin could not atone—Thou must save and Thou along:  
In my hand no price I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling.”<sup>3</sup>

Not only is salvation free, but *Salvation is full*. By this, I mean that when God saves, He saves completely. If Jesus died and presented His life as a sacrifice for sin, it might be a noble story of divine love; but it would be an incomplete story. For if He died because of our sin, and His body now lies mouldering in a dark tomb, how can we know that He can deliver us from death? It is precisely because He conquered death and was raised from the death that we have life. If His resurrection was a secret resurrection, or some sort of a spiritual event, then how can we know that He will do all that He has promised to do?

However, Christ the Lord did conquer death, being raised from the dead and coming out of the tomb. Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians of the message he brought to Corinth. “I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me” [1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-8].

The Good News tells how Christ died because of our sin, that He was attested to be dead and was buried, and that He broke the bonds of death and came out of the tomb. The Risen Saviour was witnessed by multiple people who testified that it was him and not another. The Good News is a continuing story, however; Christ ascended into the heavens where He is now seated at the right hand of the Father and from whence He is coming again to receive His people to Himself. Now, through faith in this Risen, Living Saviour, sin is forgiven and life is given and the one who believes shall never be condemned.

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<sup>3</sup> Augustus M. Toplady, “Rock of Ages”

The salvation offered in Jesus the Son of God delivers the one who believes from all sin. It has been said many times that we who are saved have been saved from the penalty of sin—there is no fear of punishment for the redeemed child of God. The redeemed are saved from the power of sin, having received the Holy Spirit to live with us, supplying His power to please God. We will be saved from the presence of sin when we receive our glorified bodies at the rapture. Therefore, we have been saved, we are being saved and we will be saved. Think on this truth! We have been saved from the penalty of sin, being delivered from condemnation. We are being saved from the power of sin through the power of the Spirit of God who lives within each believer. We shall be saved from the presence of sin when we are transformed into the image of God's own Son. This is a glorious thought to realise that God provides full salvation.

I have one other thing to say concerning the fullness of God's salvation. Man is a tripartite being: we possess a body; we are a living soul; and we were created with a spirit to enable us to commune with God. Paul recognises this when he prays for the Thessalonian saints, "May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it" [1 THESSALONIANS 5:23, 24].

I realise there are good people who will argue that man is a dichotomy; their contention is that soul and spirit are the same entity. I fall into another camp that accepts that Paul wrote precisely what the Spirit prompted him to write. He sees separate elements in the makeup of mankind. The view that man is a trichotomy is consistent with the understanding that man is created in the image of God. As God presents Himself as a Triunity, so He has created man as a triunity. Again, this is consistent with what has been written in the Letter to Hebrew Christians. "The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" [HEBREWS 4:12]. If soul and spirit are merely names for the identical aspect of man's being, then joints and marrow are the same entities, and thoughts and intentions are identical.

I have said all that to state this comforting fact. God's full salvation saves man completely. God saves the soul, gives the redeemed a new spirit and promises a glorified body. The soul of man, the sentient aspect of his being, the ability to think and to reason, is fallen by nature. This is what the Bible often calls "the natural person." When one is redeemed, the natural mind is transformed to permit viewing matters as does God. Here is what the Apostle says. "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. 'For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?' But we have the mind of Christ" [1 CORINTHIANS 2:14-16].

Just as God saves the soul of those who are redeemed, so He gives the saved a new spirit. The spirit of man was created to commune with God. In our fallen condition, our spirit is dead; and we ourselves are dead in our trespasses and sins [see EPHESIANS 2:1-7]. This is the intent of Paul's words to Titus. "We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" [TITUS 3:3-7].

Of course, this present body is subject to the ravages of sin. We age and the body reveals the marks of our ruined condition. Again, the Apostle speaks of this revelation of sin's effect in our lives when he writes the Corinthians, "We do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" [2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18].

Yet one other place eloquently contrasts the body that is marked by the fallen condition and that which the redeemed are promised at the return of Christ the Lord. "Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself" [PHILIPPIANS 3:17-21].

God's salvation is full, saving body, soul and spirit. Rejoice in the knowledge that God saves the soul, gives a new spirit and promises a new body. He saves completely.

**Salvation is final.** By this, I mean that there is no "more." False teachers are always adding "something more" to the Good News. "God saves by faith, but if you want to be a real Christian," they will argue, adding something more. Salvation is complete in Christ. This is the gift of God, freely given to all who receive Christ Jesus as Master over life. The evangelical heresy teaches us to have faith in Christ in order to be saved and then dedicate our life at some point removed from the point of salvation. If Christ is Master over life, we are dedicated to Him. There is no need to rededicate what is dedicated. It can only be because the supposed dedication was defective that one would find it necessary to rededicate life.

Therefore, when God saves an individual, He saves that one eternally. We speak of eternal life, and then act as though it were probationary. If I can fall from grace, it is a mockery of all that is written to speak of eternal life. If I can be saved at one point in time and then be lost, the words spoken by Jesus Himself have no meaning.

Recall this strong statement Jesus gave to religious leaders on one occasion. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one" [JOHN 10:27-30]. The Master says His own follow Him because He knows them. He says He gives His own eternal life, and plainly states that "they will never perish." Moreover, because He and the Father are one, He affirms that no one can snatch them out of His hand.

I was raised in the home of a good man who had a different view of salvation from that which I now hold. After I had come to faith and received appointment to Christ's service, my father visited me in my home in Texas. Sitting at our kitchen table one evening, he asked about the faith I now professed. He was deeply disturbed at the thought that I held to the security of the believer. "Son, if I believed as you do," he argued, "I'd go out and take my fill of sin."

"Dad," I remonstrated with him, "that is the difference between us—I've had my fill of sin." With that, I turned to this passage and read the words that we just read, pointing that that as one who believes I am held secure in the hand of the Master, and no one can snatch them out of His hand.



“I can snatch myself out of His hand,” he asserted.

“Then you are greater than the Father Himself,” I gently chided.

The security of the believer is the will of the Father. Rest secure in the Master’s own promise. “This is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” [JOHN 6:39,40]. Dear people, we can rest secure in this knowledge. The One who called all things into being, the One who made the stars and named each one, the One who bent down to breathe the breath of life into the man He created, calls us by name and holds us secure in His great hand. This is true for each one who is twice-born. His salvation is final.

**HIS PURPOSE** — Each Christian, as if true with the Apostle, is able to testify, “I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life” [1 TIMOTHY 1:16]. When the Master returns, He will be glorified in those whom He has redeemed. Writing the suffering saints in Thessalonica, Paul comforted them by pointing to the contrast between the fate of those who were then persecuting them and their own promised reception by the Coming King of Glory. “God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed” [2 THESSALONIANS 1:6-10]. Jesus is coming “to be glorified in His saints.” At that time, He will be “marvelled at among all who have believed.”

Even now, the Son of God is glorified in those whom He has redeemed. There is an encouraging statement in the Master’s High Priestly prayer. Before the Father, Jesus prayed, “All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them” [JOHN 17:10]. As we walk humbly before the Lord, seeking His glory, He displays His patience and is glorified through bringing many sons to glory.

Those who knew me before I was a redeemed are sometimes struck by the transformation. They knew me as one who was far from grace. It was undoubtedly difficult to believe that God could save someone such as me. However, I did receive mercy and I did give myself to God’s service. During those early years of my service, it was as though I was living parallel to the Apostle’s experience. “I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only were hearing it said, ‘He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy’” [GALATIANS 1:22,23].

“They glorified God because of me.” You may be assured that many individuals glorify God because of you. As you serve Him and as you live according to the grace you have received, many people witness your life and they glorify God because of you. As you patiently continue in humble service before Him, many people witness your life; and though they may say nothing to you, they know you and they witness the transformation that has taken place and they see the reality of Christ in your life. Perhaps you came to faith out of a godly home where you were redeemed at a young age. You wonder if there is any power in your witness because you never knew the dissipation of a life destroyed by gross sin. I would encourage you to note that you were spared such devastation by the grace of God, and He is glorified in your salvation.

“I thank Him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord.” This is the praise that marks each child of God. When I worshipped among the block churches down in Dallas County, we sometimes sang a song that had the refrain, “You brought me from a mighty long way.” Each of us can give precisely this testimony. And the work He has begun, He will bring to completion at His return.

Now, I must ask, do you know this Jesus of whom I have spoken this day? Are you able to give Him thanks? Can you testify that you have received mercy? Is Christ the Lord praised in you? If you are religious but have no vital connection to Him, you have not received mercy. Mercy is extended to all who will receive it. The Word promises, “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is my Master,’ believing in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. It is with the heart that one believes and is made right with the Father, and it is with the mouth the one confesses and is set free.” Do you have that freedom? Is this your testimony? The Word promises, “Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved.”<sup>4</sup> Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> See **ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13**